

W.H.G. Kingston

"The Woodcutter of Gutech"

Chapter One.

A traveller was making his way through the Black Forest in Germany. A pack was on his back, of a size which required a stout man to carry it, and a thick staff was in his hand. He had got out of his path by attempting to make a short cut, and in so doing had lost his way, and had been since wandering he knew not where. Yet he was stout of heart, as of limb, and a night spent in the depths of the forest would have concerned him but little had he not set a value upon time. "I have lost so much in my days of ignorance and folly," he kept saying, "that I must make up by vigilance what has been thus misspent. I wish that I had known better. However, I am now ready to spend all, and be spent in the work of the Good Master I serve."

The ground was uneven, his load heavy, and the weather warm. Still he trudged bravely on, consoling himself by giving forth, in rich full tones, a hymn of Hans Sachs of Nuremburg, the favourite poet of Protestant Germany in those days.

Thus he went on climbing up the steep side of the hill, out of which dark rocks and tall trees protruded in great confusion. At last he got into what looked like a path. "All right now," he said to himself; "this must lead somewhere, and I have still an hour of daylight to find my way out of the forest. When I get to the top of this hill I shall probably be better able to judge what direction to take." He trudged on as before, now and then stopping to take breath, and then once more going on bravely. At length the sound of a woodman's axe caught his ear.

"All right," said he. "I should not have allowed my heart to doubt about the matter. The Good One who has protected me hitherto will still continue to be my Guide and Friend."

He stopped to listen from which direction the sounds came. The loud crash of a falling tree enabled him better to judge, and by the light of the sinking sun, which found its way through the branches of the tall trees, he made directly towards the spot. He soon caught sight of an old man, stripped to his shirt and trousers, who with his gleaming axe was hewing the branches

of the tree he had just felled. Not far off stood a young boy with a couple of donkeys, which he was beginning to load with fagots, near a pile of which they stood.

"Friend woodman," said the traveller, as he got up to him, and the old man stood for a moment leaning on his axe, with an inquiring glance in his eye. "Friend woodman, I have lost my way; can you help me to find it?"

"Not to-night, friend traveller," answered the woodman. "If I was to attempt to put you on your way, you would lose it again in five minutes. This is no easy country for a man ignorant of it to pass through without a guide, and neither I nor little Karl there have time just now to accompany you. But you look like an honest man, and if you will come with me to my cottage, I will help you as far as I can to-morrow morning."

"Thank you," said the traveller. "I accept your offer."

"Well then, I have just made my last stroke," said the old man, lifting up his axe. "We will load our asses and be off. We have some way to go, as I live farther up the valley of Gutech, and even I prefer daylight to darkness for travelling these wild paths. If you had not found me I cannot say when you would have got out of the forest."

Without further waste of words, the old man and young Karl set to work to load the asses, strapping on the huge fagots with thongs of leather, while the patient animals, putting out their fore-legs, quietly endured all the tugs and pulls to which they were subjected.

"That pack of yours seems heavy, friend traveller," said the old man, glancing at his companion; "let me carry it for you."

"No, no! Thanks to you," answered the traveller. "I am strong and hearty. I would not put that on your shoulders which I feel burdensome to my own."

"Then let us put it on the back of one of the asses," said the woodcutter; "it will make but little difference to our long-eared friend."

"A merciful man is merciful to his beast," said the traveller. "The poor brutes seem already somewhat overloaded, and I should be unwilling to add to their pain for the sake of relieving myself."

"Then let Karl, there, carry it; he is sturdy, and can bear it some little way, at all events," said the old man.

"I would not place on young shoulders what I find tire a well-knit pair," said the traveller, glancing at young Karl. "But perhaps he may like to get some of the contents of my pack inside his head," he added.

"Down his mouth, I suppose you mean," said the old man, laughing. "Is it food or liquor you carry in your pack?"

"No, indeed, friend," answered the traveller. "Yet it is food, of a sort food for the mind, and better still, food for the soul. Is your soul ever hungry, friend?"

"I know not what you mean," answered the old man. "I have a soul, I know, for the priest tells me so; and so have my relatives who have gone before me, as I know to my cost; for they make me pay pretty roundly to get their souls out of purgatory. I hope Karl there will in his turn pay for mine when I die."

"Ah, friend, yes, I see how it is," said the traveller. "Your soul wants a different sort of nourishment from what it ever has had. I have great hopes that the contents of my pack will afford it that nourishment."

The traveller was walking on all this time with the old man and Karl, behind the asses. Karl kept looking up in the former's face with an inquiring glance, the expression of his countenance varying as the traveller continued his remarks.

"I will not keep you in suspense any longer," said the traveller. "My pack contains copies of that most precious book which has lately been translated into our mother tongue by Dr Martin Luther, and from which alone we have any authority for the Christian faith we profess. I have besides several works by the same learned author, as also works by other writers."

"I wish that I could read them," said the old man, with a sigh; "but if I had the power I have not the time, and my eyes are somewhat dim by lamplight. Karl there was taught to read last winter by a young man who was stopping at my cottage, and whom I took in, having found him with a broken leg in the forest."

"Oh, grandfather, why he taught you also to read almost as well as I do!" said Karl. "All you have been wishing for has been a

book in big print, and perhaps if the merchant has one he will sell it to you."

"We will examine the contents of my pack when we get to your cottage, my friend, and I daresay something will be found to suit you," observed the traveller. "If you have made a beginning, you will soon be able to read these books, and I am sure when once you have begun you will be eager to go on."

Chapter Two.

The gloom of evening was settling down over the wild scene of mountain, forest, rock, and stream, when the traveller reached the woodman's hut. "You are welcome, friend, under the roof of Nicholas Moretz," said the old man, as he ushered his guest into his cottage.

Karl mean time unloading the asses, placed the fagots on a pile raised on one side of the hut.

"Here you can rest for the night, and to-morrow morning, when we proceed into the town to dispose of our fagots, you can accompany us without risk of losing your way," the woodcutter observed, pushing open the door.

As he did so, a young girl ran out to meet him, and throwing her arms round his neck, received a kiss on her fair brow. She drew back with a bashful look when she saw the stranger.

"Sweet one, you must get another bowl and platter for our guest," said the old man. "As he has travelled far with a heavy load on his back, he will do justice to your cookery, Mistress Meta. She and the boy, my grandson," he added, turning to the traveller, "are my joy and comfort in life, now that my poor daughter has been taken from me."

The traveller unstrapped his heavy pack from his shoulders, and placed it on a bench by the side of the wall; after which Meta brought him a bowl of fresh water and a towel, that he might wash his hands and face, which they not a little required. While he was performing this operation she placed the supper which she had prepared upon the table, which, if somewhat coarse, was abundant.

By this time Karl came in, and the whole party took their seats on stools round the table. "Let us bless God for the good things He bestows on us, and above all for the spiritual blessings He has so mercifully prepared for us," said the traveller.

"I suppose you are a priest," said Moretz, when the stranger had concluded. "I thank you for the prayer you have offered up for us."

"No, my friend, I am no priest," answered the traveller. "My name is Gottlieb Spena. I am a humble man with a small amount of learning; but I am able to read God's blessed word, and that is my delight every day I live. My wish is to serve Him, and I feel sure I can best do so by carrying this pack of books about the country, and disposing of them to those who desire to buy."

"This is a new thing, surely," observed Moretz. "I should like after supper to see some of these wonderful books you speak of, and to hear you read from the one you call 'God's word;' and if I find the price is not too great, perhaps I may purchase one for Meta and Karl."

The young girl's eyes sparkled as her grandfather spoke. "Oh, I should like to have that book!" she exclaimed. "I have heard of it, though I knew not that it was to be sold, or that people were allowed to read it. I thought it was only for the priests to read."

"Blessed be God, for us unlearned ones who cannot understand the language in which it is written, it has been translated into our native tongue; and God has sent it as His message of love to all human beings, young and old, rich and poor. It is so easy, that he who runs may read. The youngest child may understand the message it gives, while it is equally suited to the wisest philosopher, and to the most powerful king on his throne."

The young people hurried through their suppers while their guest was speaking, so eager were they to see the package opened. In those days thousands and tens of thousands of people in so-called Christian lands had never seen a Bible, though the translation made by Dr Martin Luther was being spread in every direction throughout the length and breadth of Germany by men like Gottlieb Spena, who carried packs filled with the sacred volume on their shoulders. They did the same afterwards in France, where the name of colporteurs (see Note) was in consequence given to them.

Meta waited anxiously till her grandfather and their guest had finished their suppers, and then as rapidly as possible cleared away the bowls and platters which they had used. The book-hawker with a smile observed her anxiety, and placing his pack on the table, opened it, and exhibited to the admiring eyes of the spectators a number of volumes. "This," he said, taking out one, "is the Old Testament, or God's first message to man; and this is the New Testament, His last message, in which He shows Himself to us as a God of love, mercy, and pity, though by no means less a God of justice than He does in the Old Testament. But here He shows us clearly how His justice can be amply satisfied, without the sinner being punished as he deserves; how our sins may be blotted out by the One great Sacrifice offered up. Do you understand me, my friends? The sacrifice has been offered up, the debt has been paid, the obedience has been fulfilled by Jesus Christ, who came on earth and took upon Himself the body and nature of man, sin excepted. He was obedient in all things—first by God's wish coming on earth, and then dutiful and loving to His parents, merciful and forgiving to those who persecuted Him, ever going about and healing their infirmities, and teaching them the way of salvation. The good Saviour allowed Himself to be hung upon the cross; His hands and feet and sides were pierced; His blood was poured out for us,—ay, for us,—for you and me,—for the vilest of sinners. All this was done by the Just One for the unjust. God tells us to believe in Jesus, and that through believing we are saved,—in other words, that we should take hold of it by faith, and thus accomplish what that loving God, through the Holy Spirit, said: 'The just shall live by faith.'"

The young people drew in their breath, and gazed steadfastly at the speaker. To hear of sin and the cross was not new to them, for they had been at churches sometimes at holy days; but it was all a mummerly and spectacle, with which the priests alone seemed to have to do. The truths now uttered were assuredly gaining some entrance into their minds.

"I do not understand quite what you say, friend Spena," said the old man; "but surely God does not intend to give us the blessings of heaven without our doing anything to merit it? He intends us to labour, and toil, and pay the priests, and perform penances, and go to mass, and make confession of our sins to the priests, before He could think of letting us into that blessed place."

"I once thought as you do," answered the book-hawker. "When I read God's word, I learned to think very differently."

As he spoke he opened the Testament. "Listen. The Holy Spirit says through the book, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Here He says nothing about penances, or doing anything of that sort. Listen again: A ruler of the Jews, a learned man, paid a visit once to Jesus, to ask Him about the way of salvation, and His answer was, 'Ye must be born again.' He does not say you must do anything, or you must try to mend your ways, or you must alter your mode of living, you must go to confession, or pay for masses, or anything of that sort. The ruler could not at first at all understand the answer. Our blessed Lord then explained it in these words: 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' Now in the Old Testament we read of a circumstance which happened when the Israelites were travelling through the desert, on their way out of the bondage of Egypt to the land of promise. They were there bitten by fiery serpents, whose bite caused certain death. They felt themselves dying, and cried to be saved. God told Moses to make a brazen serpent, and to raise it up in the midst of the camp, and directed him to inform the people that all those bitten by the serpent who looked up at the serpent should be saved. Every one of them, without exception, who did thus look, was cured. You see, my friend, by putting the two accounts together, we see clearly what our Lord means,—not that we are to do anything in a way of obtaining merit, but simply look to Him who hung on the cross, was thus lifted up for us, and is now seated on the right hand of God, pleading as the only Mediator all He did for us. A king, when he bestows gifts, gives them through his grace. It is an insult to offer to purchase them. Far more does God bestow His chief gifts as an act of grace. I do not say that He does not expect something in return; but He gives salvation freely, and will allow of nothing to be done beforehand, but simply that the gift should be desired, and its value appreciated, or partly appreciated; for we never can value it as it deserves."

The woodcutter and his grandchildren listened earnestly to these and many other simple truths, as their guest went on reading and explaining portion after portion. Nor did he omit to pray that God, through the Holy Spirit, would enlighten the minds of his hearers, and enable them to comprehend what he was reading and what he was saying. Hour after hour thus passed by. Several times did Meta rise and trim the lamp.

"Must you hasten on your journey? or can you not rest here another day, and tell us more of those glorious things?" said the old man, placing his hand on Spena's shoulder, and gazing earnestly into his face.

"Yes, I will stay, friend," answered the book-hawker, "if by so doing I can place more clearly before you the way of salvation."

At length the inmates of the cottage and their guest lay down to rest on their rough couches, and angels looked down from heaven, rejoicing at what they there saw and heard.

Note: Colporteurs, literally "neck-carriers;" because their packs were strung round their necks, or, rather, the strap went round their chests.

Chapter Three.

Gottlieb Spena was much the better for his day's rest, and the following morning set out with old Moretz and his grandson on their weekly journey, when they went into the neighbouring town to dispose of their fagots.

"And how came you to undertake this good work, friend?" asked the old man, as they journeyed.

"In a few words I can answer you," said the book-hawker. "I was once a monk, a lazy drone. Our convent was rich, and we had nothing to do except to appear for so many hours every day in church, and repeat or chant words, of the sense of which we did not for a moment trouble ourselves. Copies of the blessed gospel, however, were brought among us, and certain works by Dr Martin Luther, and friends of his, which stirred us up to read that gospel, and to see whether we held the faith it teaches, or were leading the lives it requires. First one and then another, and finally almost all of us came to the conclusion that we were not in any way living according to God's law, and that the whole system we supported was evil and wrong; and we all agreed to go forth into the world, and to become useful members of society. Some, who had the gift of speaking, after a time became preachers of the gospel. As I had not that gift, and had but a small amount of learning, I resolved, by the advice of Dr Martin Luther, to put a pack upon my shoulders, and to go

forth and to distribute the written word through the land, and to speak a word in season, as God might give me opportunity. If the Pope or Tetzl can catch me I have no doubt that they will burn me as they burned John Huss. But I have counted the cost, and I am prepared for that or anything else that can befall me. I have placed myself in God's hands, and fear not what man can do to me."

"You are a brave man," said old Moretz, grasping the book-hawker's hand; "and whatever you may say of yourself, I should say that you are a true preacher of God's word, and I pray that there may be many others like you going forth throughout our country."

"Amen," said Spena, as the old man and he, warmly shaking each other's hand, parted.

"I hope there may be very many better men than I am;" and he went on his way, selling his books and speaking a word in season; and thus a humble instrument, as he thought himself, bringing many souls to the knowledge of the truth, and to accept the free offers of eternal life through a simple, loving faith in Christ Jesus.

We must here observe that before leaving the woodcutter's hospitable hut, Gottlieb Spena delivered the precious book into the custody of Meta, bidding her an affectionate farewell, with the prayer that it might prove a blessing to her soul and to those dear to her. Meta never failed to pass every moment she could steal from her daily avocations in perusing the New Testament. When her grandfather and brother returned home from their work, she had always some fresh account to give them of which she had read; and from henceforth the old man and Karl passed a part of every evening in reading it, while the great part of that day which God has given to toiling man as a day of rest was passed in gaining knowledge from its precious pages.

Old Moretz had now got what he never before possessed. He understood the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, whom he loved and desired to serve. The more he saw of the love of God the more he felt his own sinfulness and unworthiness, and felt the need of a better righteousness than any good works of his own. The Holy Spirit was teaching him this and other truths from the Scriptures. Meta and Karl also were daily growing in knowledge and grace. They had before been contented and cheerful, but it was the mere happiness of health and freedom from sorrow. Now they possessed a joy which nothing could

take away from them. They relied with simplicity and confidence on God's word. They knew that which He said He would do. "If grandfather is taken from us, or you are taken, Karl, I know we shall be parted but for a short time. We shall meet again and be happy, oh, so happy!" exclaimed Meta, as Karl came in one day when his work was over, and found her ever and anon glancing at her Bible, which lay open on the table, while she was engaged in some business about the cottage.

Moretz soon found that those who hold to the truth are often called upon to suffer for the truth. So it has been from the beginning. God requires faith, but He desires us to prove our faith. Other men, like Spena, were traversing the country, not only like him distributing books, but openly preaching the principles of the Reformation. They did so in many places, at great hazard to themselves. The papists, where they could, opposed and persecuted them, as the Apostle Paul before his conversion did the Christians he could get hold of, haling them to prison, to torture, and to death.

Moretz often went into the town of Hornberg to sell his fagots. Even he was not without his enemies. As he and Karl were one day driving their asses laden with wood into the town, they encountered a long string of pack-horses which had brought in their cargoes and were now returning. Behind them rode a big, burly man, dressed as a farmer, on a stout, strong horse. He scowled on Moretz, who was about to pass him, and roughly told him to move his asses and himself out of the way. He had an old grudge against Moretz, who had resisted an unjust attempt to seize some land to which the rich man had no right.

"With pleasure, Master Johann Herder. I would not wish to occupy your place, as I doubt not you would not wish to fill mine."

"What does he mean?" exclaimed Herder; but Moretz had already done as he was bid, and got quickly out of the way. Herder went on some little distance, muttering to himself, and then stopped and looked in the direction Moretz had taken. Ordering his servants to proceed with the animals, he wheeled round his horse and slowly followed the woodcutter.

Moretz quickly disposed of his fagots among his usual customers, and was about to return home when he saw a large crowd in the square assembled round a man who was addressing them from a roughly-raised platform. Moretz could not resist the temptation of joining the crowd, for a few words which reached his ears interested him greatly. He got as close

up to the speaker as he could with his asses, on the backs of which he and Karl were mounted. The preacher wore a monk's dress, but instead of a crucifix he held a book in his hand, which Moretz and Karl guessed rightly was the Bible. He argued that it being God's revelation to man, it was sufficient for all that man requires to show him the way by which he might get out of his fallen state and obtain eternal happiness. "Are we then," he asked, "to be guided by this book, or to be directed by men who say things directly opposed to this book? The priests have taught you that there is a purgatory. It was a notion held by the heathen nations, but God's ancient people, the Jews, knew nothing of it, and this book says not a word about it. A man has been going about the country, sent by the Pope, selling bits of paper, which he tells the people will get the souls of their friends and their own souls out of this purgatory. He makes them pay a somewhat high price for these pieces of paper, and if we look at them at their real value, a prodigiously high price. Now the Bible says, 'The soul that sinneth it shall surely die.' 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.' It nowhere says if we are ever so great sinners, and die in our sins, our friends may buy the means by which we can escape the consequence of sin. It does, however, say that however great a sinner you are, if you turn to Jesus Christ, and trust to Him, you will be saved; and it gives us the account of the thief on the cross, who, even at the last moment, trusting to Jesus, was saved."

Thus the preacher continued arguing from the Bible, showing from it numberless falsehoods put forth by the Church of Rome. Then he put very clearly and forcibly the simple gospel before the people,—man's fallen state; the love of Christ which induced Him to come on earth to draw man out of that fallen state, if he would accept the means freely offered to him. Still, unhappily, man continued to "love darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil;" and thus do the cardinals and bishops and priests, who are the ruling powers of the Church of Rome, endeavour to keep the minds of people in ignorance, that they may draw money from the pockets of their dupes, and continue to live on in indolence and vice.

Chapter Four.

While he was speaking a large body of people, led on by a man on horseback, and accompanied by several priests, were seen advancing at the farther end of the square. Many of the people

fled, but the preacher boldly kept his ground, as did Moretz and Karl, who, indeed, scarcely heeded the movement of the people surrounding him. In another minute Moretz found himself dragged from his pack-saddle by a couple of men, and looking up, he saw Johann Herder frowning down upon him. He struggled to free himself, for his muscles were well-knit, and he had lost but little of his vigour. He succeeded in getting near enough to Karl to whisper, "Fly away home and look after Meta. God will take care of me. Do not be afraid. Keep up your spirits, Karl. Off!—off! quick! quick!"

He had scarcely uttered these words before he was again seized by two additional men, who set on him, and he saw that to struggle further was useless.

"Bring him along," said Herder, "with the other prisoners. The magistrates will quickly adjudge the case. I knew that I should some day have my revenge," he whispered into the old man's ear, "and I intend to make you feel it bitterly."

Moretz was thankful to see that Karl had made his escape, and without opposition followed his captors to the hall where the magistrates were sitting. They had resolved to prevent any public preaching in their town.

While the magistrates' officers were making prisoners, several men rallied round the preacher, and before he could be seized, got him down from the platform in their midst, and then retired down the street, no one venturing to attack them.

Moretz, with six or seven more prisoners, was placed before the magistrates, several priests being present, eager to obtain their condemnation. Moretz was asked how he dared stop and listen to an heretical preacher, and whether he thought the preacher was speaking the truth, or falsehood?

"Had I thought he had been speaking falsehood, I would not have stopped to listen to him," answered the old man, boldly. "He spoke things, too, which I know are to be found in the word of God, and I am sure that all in that book is true."

"Evidently a fearful heretic!" exclaimed the magistrates. "We must make an example of him, and put a stop to this sort of thing. In the meantime, to prison with him!"

"Stay," said one. "Though guilty of listening, perchance he will recant, and acknowledge himself in error."

"Indeed I will not," answered the old man. "I believe God rather than man, and will not deny the truths He has taught me."

"Off with him!—off with him! You see there is no use discussing matters with a heretic," exclaimed some of the other magistrates.

The other prisoners were now tried. Two or three only of them, were, however, committed to prison, the others acknowledging themselves in error. Of these, however, several as they went away muttered words complimentary neither to their judges nor to the Pope and his cardinals.

Moretz, with several other prisoners, was marched off under a strong guard to the prison. It was a dark, old, gloomy building, which had been a castle, but having been partly dismantled, had been fitted up again for its present purpose. It contained several long passages, both above ground and under ground, leading to arched cells with strong oak doors plated with iron.

Into one of these dungeons Moretz was now thrust. There he was left in solitude. There was but little light, but he discovered a heap of straw in one corner, on which he sat himself down. "Well," he thought, "other people have been shut up in prison cells worse than this, and Christians too." And then he thought of Paul and Silas in the prison at Philippi, and how they had spent their time in praying and singing praises to God. "That is just what I ought to do," he said to himself; but he did not pray so much for himself as for his dear little Meta and Karl, that God would take care of them, and deliver him in His own good time, if it was His will to do so. Then he began to sing, for Spena had left a book of hymns, the words of several of which he had already learned by heart. "The feet of Paul and Silas were in the stocks," he said to himself, "then surely I am better off than they were; I ought to praise God for that;" and so he sang on right cheerfully. However, not being accustomed to sit long, he soon got up and walked about his cell. He could make but few paces without turning. A gleam of light came through an aperture in the upper part of the wall. "I am not much below ground, at all events," he observed; and it set him thinking, always lifting up his heart in prayer to God.

Chapter Five.

Meanwhile Karl had returned home with the donkeys. Poor Meta was greatly grieved and alarmed when she heard the sad news. "Those cruel men will be killing dear grandfather, as they killed John Huss," she said, looking with tearful eyes at Karl. "We can pray for him, however, that is one comfort."

They did not fail to do as Meta said; not only night and morning, but several times during the day; before Karl set off on his expedition into the forest to cut wood, and when he returned, or when he went into the town to sell his fagots. "When grandfather told me to run away, he intended that I should work hard to support you, Meta, and so I will."

Meta was accustomed to be alone. She was a happy-hearted girl, and used to sing and amuse herself very well, when she knew that her grandfather and brother would soon return to her. The case was very different now. Her great comfort was reading the Bible. She had more time to do that than formerly. Without it she felt sure she would have broken down altogether. Still, occasionally, she felt her spirits sink so low that she could not help wishing to accompany Karl into the forest. "I can take the book and read to him when he stops to rest or to eat his dinner; and I can talk to him and cheer him up, for he must feel quite as sad as I do, I know."

Karl gladly agreed to her proposal, so the next day, shutting up the cottage, they set out together. The way was rough, but Meta was well accustomed to tread it, and without encountering any danger they reached the part of the forest in which Karl usually laboured. Meta carried out her plan just as she had proposed, and Karl, though he rested longer than had been his wont, got through more work than usual. For several days she did the same, very much to her own and Karl's satisfaction. On one occasion she was seated on a piece of timber, with her book on her knees, reading, while Karl sat on the ground at her feet, eating his frugal meal, but slowly though, for every now and then he looked up to ask her the meaning of certain passages, or to make some remark.

They were thus employed, entirely absorbed in the subject. Some slight noises reached their ears, but if their attention was drawn to them they thought they were caused by the asses which were browsing near brushing among the bushes. Meta read on. At length she stopped, when, looking up, she saw standing near her, and gazing with a look of astonishment, a gentleman in a rich hunting suit, a short sword by his side, a horn hung round his neck, and a jewelled dagger in his belt. His white beard and moustache, and his furrowed cheeks, showed

that he was already advanced in life, though he looked active and strong. A pleasant smile passed over his countenance, as Meta, uttering an exclamation of astonishment, gazed up at him. Karl started to his feet, and instinctively put himself in an attitude of defence.

"Do not be alarmed, my young friends," said the gentleman. "I wish to serve you rather than to do you any harm. What is that book you are reading from, little maiden?"

"The Bible, sir, God's word," answered Meta, without hesitation.

"A very blessed book, and a very blessed message it contains," observed the gentleman. "But how came you young foresters to possess it, and to learn to read it?"

"I learned at Herr Gellet's school," answered Meta, "and a good man who came by this way, sold us the book at a small price. It is worth ten times the sum we gave, I am sure of that."

"And where do you live?" asked the gentleman.

Meta told him.

"And is your grandfather sick, that he is not with you?" he inquired.

"Alas! he has been cast into prison for listening to a preacher of God's word," said Meta, "and we know not what they are going to do with him, whether they will burn him, as they have done others, or keep him shut up."

The nobleman, for such by his appearance they supposed him to be, continued looking with great interest at Meta, while she was speaking. Having made further inquiries about the old woodcutter, he joined several of his companions who had been standing all the time at a little distance, scarcely perceived till now by Meta and Karl. One of them had been holding his horse, which he mounted, and rode away, conversing with him through the forest.

Karl having made up his fagots, proceeded homewards, talking with Meta as they went, about the interview with the nobleman, and wondering who he could be. "I wonder whether he is the Count Furstenburg, whose castle is, I know, some short distance off, though I have never been up to it. I have several times seen the tops of the towers over the trees. Yet whenever I have heard his name mentioned he has been spoken of as a

fierce, cruel lord, tyrannical both to his dependants and even to those of his own family. I know I have heard of all sorts of bad things about him, but grandfather never likes to speak of him."

"Then I am sure that noble cannot be the Count Furstenburg," said Meta: "he spoke so gently and looked so kindly at us."

Scarcely had they entered their cottage than they heard horses' hoofs approaching it. Karl ran out to see who it was, while Meta was preparing the supper.

"Oh, Meta!" exclaimed Karl, running back, "it is that dreadful man, Johann Herder, our grandfather's great enemy! His coming bodes us no good."

They consulted whether they should bolt the door, but Meta advised that they should show no alarm; and as Herder could easily break open the door, it would be useless to try and keep him out.

In another minute Herder entered the cottage. He cast a frowning glance around him. "Where is your grandfather?" he asked.

"I am afraid, sir, he is in prison," answered Meta.

"Why is he there?" he asked again.

"Karl says, because he was listening to a preacher of the gospel," answered Meta.

"He was assisting in creating a disturbance rather," observed Herder.

"I am sure grandfather is not the man to do that," exclaimed Karl. "I was with him, and he was as quiet as any man could be."

"Then you ought to have been taken prisoner too," exclaimed the farmer. "I must see to that. And what book is that you have by your side, maiden?" he asked, glancing at Meta's Bible, which she was prepared to read.

"God's word, sir," said Meta, firmly. "We always read it before sitting down to meals. It is by reading it that we learn of salvation. This book says, 'Faith cometh by hearing,' or reading God's word, and by faith we are saved."

"Those are strange doctrines you are speaking," said the rough man, yet feeling, perhaps, more than he was willing to acknowledge, the force of her words, and greatly struck by her calmness and bravery.

"They cannot be new, sir," answered Meta, "for they were written by the apostles themselves, nor are they strange, for the same reason."

"I came not to discuss such matters," said Herder, turning away. "My reason for coming here was to tell your grandfather that he must move out of this cottage, as I have bought it. As he is not here, I give you the notice, and let me tell you that the opinions you utter are very dangerous. They are not such as to please the priests or bishop; take care, therefore, what you are about." Without further words, Herder turned round, unwilling it seemed to look any longer on the young girl and her brother who had so boldly confronted him. Leaving the cottage, he mounted his horse and rode off.

The young people could not help being alarmed. It would be a sad thing to have to leave their old home, and for their grandfather, when he got out of prison, to be obliged to seek for a new one. His other threats also boded them no good. They had, however, strength the rough man knew nothing of. As soon as they were again alone, they knelt down and prayed for protection, nor failed to obtain the comfort prayer will always bring. They then returned to the table and partook of their yet untasted supper. Before it was finished, a knock was heard at the door.

"Shall I open it?" asked Karl. "Perhaps it is Herr Herder come back again."

"Oh, no!" said Meta, "he would not knock. We should not be afraid to open the door."

Karl withdrew the bolt, and who should he see but the book-hawker, Gottlieb Spena! They recognised him at once. He entered, and saluting them, kindly inquired for their grandfather. "I trust he has not been taken from you," he said, with an expression of anxiety.

"Indeed he has, sir," said Meta, "but not by death;" and in a few words she explained what had happened.

"That is very sad, but God will protect you, my children," he observed, placing his pack, as he had before done, in a corner

of the room. "We must try and obtain his liberation. The people of Germany will no longer submit to persecution. However, I trust that, by some means, your grandfather's liberation may be obtained."

Meta and Karl warmly thanked their friend, and begged him to partake of their humble fare. This he did, seeing that there was abundance. Suddenly he exclaimed, "I have thought of a plan. I will endeavour to gain admittance to your grandfather, and if so, I trust the means may be given him to escape from the prison." As it was somewhat late, the book-hawker gladly availed himself of the shelter of the hut for the night, while he amply repaid his young hosts by reading and expounding the Scriptures to them, greatly to their satisfaction.

Chapter Six.

The old woodcutter sat in his cell, his spirits yet unbroken, and resolved, as at first, to adhere to the faith. Still, accustomed as he had been to a life in the open air, his spirits occasionally flagged and his health somewhat suffered. Often and often he thought to himself, as he examined the walls of his prison, "If I had an iron tool of some sort, I doubt if these walls would long contain me." But everything he had possessed had been taken from him when he was first brought to prison, and not even a nail could he find with which to work as he proposed. He was seated on his heap of straw, and the gaoler entered with his usual fare of brown bread and water.

"I have a message for you, old man," said the gaoler, who, though rough in appearance, spoke sometimes in a kind tone. "A holy monk wishes to see you, and bade me tell you so."

"I have no desire to see a monk," answered Moretz. "He cannot make me change my faith, and it would be time lost were he to come to me."

"But he brings you a message from your grandchildren," said the gaoler. "He bade me say that if you refused to see him—"

Moretz thought an instant. "Let him come then," he answered.

The gaoler nodded and took his departure. In a short time he returned, ushering in a sturdy, strong-looking man in a monk's dress. The gaoler retired, closing the door.

"You do not know me, friend Moretz," said his visitor, in a low voice. "I have been admitted, that I might give you spiritual comfort and advice," he said, in a louder tone, "and I gladly accepted the office." His visitor talked for some time with Moretz, producing from under his dress a book from which he read, though not without difficulty, by the gleam of light which came in through the small opening which has been spoken of. From another pocket he produced two iron instruments carefully wrapped up, so as not to strike against each other. "Here is a strong chisel," he said, "and here is a stout file. I have heard of people working their way through prison walls with worse instruments than these. Now farewell, friend Moretz. The time I am allowed to remain with you is ended, and the gaoler will be here anon to let me out of the prison."

"I fear you run a great risk," said Moretz, warmly thanking his visitor.

"For the Lord's people I am ready to run any risk," was the answer, and just then the gaoler was heard drawing back the bolts. The friar took his departure.

The old woodcutter was once more left alone. He had piled up his straw on the side of the wall on which the opening was placed. He now carefully drew it back, and began working away at a stone which had before been hidden by it. His success surpassed his expectations. There had been a drain or a hole left for some purpose, carelessly filled up. Thus hour after hour he scraped away, carefully replacing the straw directly he heard the gaoler's step near his door. What a sweet thing is liberty! The woodcutter's chief difficulty was to hide the rubbish he dug out, the straw being scarcely sufficient for that purpose. As he was working, however, he let his chisel drop. He thought the stone on which it dropped emitted a hollow sound. He worked away in consequence, to remove it, and great was his satisfaction to find beneath a hole of some size. He was now able to labour with more confidence. In a short time he had removed the stone from the wall, giving him an aperture of sufficient size to pass through. The earth beyond was soft. And now he dug and dug away, following up the hole in the pavement. He was afraid sometimes that his hands covered with earth might betray him, but the gaoler's lantern was dim, and he managed always to conceal them as much as possible when the man entered.

At length he felt sure from the height he had worked that he was near the surface of the earth on the outside. He now feared lest it might fall in during the daytime, and this made him

hesitate about working except during the hours of the night. He had saved up as many crusts of bread as his pockets would hold, in order, should it become necessary for him to lie concealed for any length of time, that he might have wherewith to support life. And now the time arrived when he believed that he should be able to extricate himself altogether. He waited till the gaoler had paid his last visit, and then watched anxiously till the thickening gloom in his cell showed him that night was approaching. He had all along of course worked in darkness, so that it being night made no difference to him. He now dug away bravely, and as he had not to carry the earth into the hole, he made great progress. At length, working with his chisel above his head, he felt it pierce through the ground. Greater caution was therefore necessary, lest the falling earth should make a noise.

The fresh air which came down restored his strength, and in a few minutes he was able to lift himself out of the hole. He did not, however, venture to stand up, but lying his length on the ground, gazed around him. The dark walls of the old castle rose up on one side. On the other, at the bottom of a steep bank, was the moat, partly filled up, however, with rubbish. Beyond, another bank had to be climbed, and beyond that again was the wild open country, the castle being just outside the walls of the town. He quickly formed his plan.

Slowly crawling on, he slid down the bank, and then stopped to see what course he should take. There appeared to be no sentries on the watch on that side of the castle, it being supposed probably that escape of any prisoners was impossible. He was thus able more boldly to search for a passage across the moat. The night was cloudy and the wind blew strong, which, though he was in consequence not so well able to find his way, prevented him being seen or heard. At length, partly wading and partly scrambling over the rubbish, he reached the opposite bank. He waited to rest, that he might the more rapidly spring up the bank. He gained the top, when looking back and seeing no one, he hurried along the open ground. He stopped not till he had obtained the shelter of some brushwood, which formed, as it were, the outskirts of the forest. He was well aware that, as at daylight his escape would be discovered, and that he could easily be tracked, he must make the best speed his strength would allow. He knew the country so well that he had no difficulty in finding his way even in the dark. He could not, however, venture to return to his own cottage. There was no lack of hiding-places where he might remain till the search after him had somewhat slackened.

At length, weary from his exertion, and having overrated his strength, he sat himself down to rest, as he thought in safety, for a few minutes. His eyelids closed in slumber, and, unconsciously to him, hour after hour had passed away.

The sound of horns and the cries of huntsmen were heard in the forest. They awoke old Moretz from his sleep. He started up, but it was too late to conceal himself. A horseman in a rich costume, which showed his rank, was close to him. "Whither away, old friend?" he exclaimed, as Moretz instinctively endeavoured to conceal himself in some brushwood near at hand. He stopped on hearing the voice of the huntsman.

"My lord," he answered, "I throw myself upon your mercy. I am guiltless of any crime, and was cast unjustly into prison, from which I have made my escape. If I am retaken, my life will be forfeited."

"That is strange," exclaimed the nobleman. "I will do my best to protect you, but I cannot venture to dispute with the law, as I might have done once on a time. As we came along we met a gang of persons, hunting, they told us, for an escaped prisoner. There is no time to be lost. Here!" and the nobleman called to one of his attendants, a tall man, very similar in figure to the woodcutter. "Here; change dresses with my old friend, and do you, as you are a bold forester and a strong, active young man, climb up into the thickest tree, and hide yourself as best you can till these hunters of their fellow-men have passed by."

The nobleman's orders were speedily obeyed, and Moretz, dressed in his livery, mounted the groom's horse and rode on with the party. The groom, meantime, who had put on the old man's clothes, affording no small amusement to his companions, climbed up into a thick tree, as he had been directed to do by his master.

"We will send thee a livery, my man, in which thou may'st return home soon, and satisfy thy hunger, which may be somewhat sharpened by longer abstinence than usual," said the count, as he rode on.

Scarcely had these arrangements been made, when the party from the gaol in search of the fugitive came up. "Has the Count Furstenburg seen an old man in a woodcutter's dress wandering through the forest?" inquired their leader, in a tone which sounded somewhat insolent.

"The Count Furstenburg is not accustomed to answer questions unless respectfully asked," replied the noble; "and so, master gaoler, you must follow your own devices, and search for your prisoner where you may best hope to find him." Then sounding his horn, he and his whole party rode on together through the forest, taking care to keep old Moretz well in their midst. Making a wide circuit, the count led them back to the castle.

Chapter Seven.

The woodcutter's astonishment at hearing who had rescued him, and where he was to find shelter, was very great. He had always entertained a great dread of the count, who, from common report, was looked upon as a cruel tyrant. The count's first care on reaching the castle was to send a servant with a livery in which the groom might return home, directing him in the same package to bring back the old woodcutter's clothes. He gave him also another message: it was to visit the cottage on his return, and to give little Meta and Karl the joyous information that their grandfather was out of prison and in safe keeping.

"And now, my friend, I will have a few words with you in my private room," said the count, as the old man stood, cap in hand, gazing at him with astonishment. "I know you better than you suppose," he said, as Moretz entered the room; and he told him of the interview he had had with his grandchildren. "I rejoice to see the way in which you are bringing them up. How is it you have taught them so to love the Bible? Do you know about it yourself?"

Moretz seeing no cause for concealment, told the count of the visit of Gottlieb Spena, the book-hawker.

"That is strange indeed," said the count. "From the same Gottlieb Spena I also, my friend, have learned the same glorious truths. You have, I doubt not, always heard me spoken of as a bad, cruel man. So I was, but I have been changed. God has found me out, and in His love and mercy has showed me the way by which I may escape the punishment most justly due to my misdeeds; and not only that, but due also to me had I never committed one-tenth part of the crimes of which I have been guilty."

It was strange to hear the once proud count thus speaking to the humble woodcutter, as to a brother or a friend.

For many weeks the old man was sheltered safely within the walls of the castle. Not only had the count, but all his house, abandoned the faith of Rome, many of them having truly accepted the offers of salvation. At length, so widely had spread the doctrines of the Reformation, that the authorities at Hornberg no longer ventured to persecute those who professed it, and Moretz did not, therefore, require the count's protection. Meta and Karl had remained at the cottage, notwithstanding the threats of Herr Herder. Every day, however, they had been expecting to receive another order to quit their home.

One morning, as they were seated at breakfast, before Karl went out to his work, a knock was heard at the door. Karl ran to it, wondering who it could be at that early hour. A shriek of joy escaped Meta's lips as, the door opening, she saw her grandfather, and the next instant she and Karl were pressed in his arms.

Great changes had of late taken place in Germany, and the authorities who had imprisoned Moretz no longer ventured to proceed as they had before done. The peasants, oppressed for centuries by the owners of the soil, and treated like slaves, had long been groaning for the blessings of civil liberty. On several occasions they had revolted against their lords, but their rebellions had always been put down with bloodshed and fearful cruelties. Once more the same desire to emancipate themselves had sprung up in all parts of the country. This desire did not arise in consequence of the progress of the Reformation. It had existed before, and Luther and the other reformers who had been aware of it had used every means to induce the people to bear their burdens, and to wait till, in God's good time, a better heart should be put into their rulers, and they should be induced to grant them that liberty which was theirs by right. Unhappily, however, men are too fond of attempting to right themselves rather than trust to God. While, as has been said, this desire for civil liberty was extending, so also was the Reformation making great progress. Many abandoned popery without embracing the gospel, and these were the people especially who desired to right themselves by the sword. Scarcely had old Moretz returned to his hut, than he was visited by several of the peasants, small farmers and others, who came to urge him to join the band they were forming in the neighbourhood. His imprisonment and its cause had become known, as had also the way he had escaped. Among others,

greatly to his surprise, his old enemy, Johann Herder, rode up to his door.

"We were foes once, but I wish to be your foe no longer, and I have come to invite you to join our noble cause."

"I am thankful to see you, Master Herder," said Moretz, "but I cannot promise to join any cause without knowing its objects."

"They are very simple," answered his guest. "We consider that all men are equal. We wish to right ourselves, and to deprive our tyrants of their power."

"But if they refuse to agree to your demands, how then will you proceed?" asked Moretz.

"We will burn their castles and their towns, and put them to death," was the answer.

"That surely is not the way to induce people to act rightly," answered Moretz. "The Bible nowhere says that we should not be soldiers, but the gospel does say very clearly that we should do violence to no man—that we should love our enemies and do good to them that persecute us. Burning houses and putting people to death is not in accordance with the will of God: of that I am sure."

"But the gospel gives us freedom, and we have accepted the gospel, and therefore have a right to liberty," answered Herder.

"The liberty of which the gospel speaks is very different from that which you desire, my friend," said Moretz. "The freedom which that gives us is freedom from superstition, from the tyranny of Satan, from the fear of man, from the dread of the misfortunes and sufferings to which people are liable. No, friend Herder, I cannot join you."

Much more was said on both sides. Moretz remained firm; and Herder went away, indignant that one to whom he had offered to be reconciled—very much against his own feelings—should have refused to join what, in his smaller knowledge of the gospel plan, he considered right and justifiable. Herder had become a Protestant, and knew enough about the truth to be aware that Christians are bound to forgive their enemies. He also was convinced that the saints cannot hear prayer, that purgatory is a fiction, and that confession should be made to God and not to man. But he had no grace in his heart. He prided himself greatly on having visited old Moretz and

expressed himself ready to become his friend. Moretz, on the other hand, had accepted not only the letter but the spirit of the gospel. He knew himself by nature to be a sinner. He had given his heart to God. He desired to please Him by imitating the example of His blessed Son, and he trusted for salvation alone to the complete and perfect sacrifice made on the cross.

Moretz soon found that the proposed rebellion had commenced in various districts, and that already several peasant bands had proceeded to acts of violence. Immediately he thought that the castle of the Count of Furstenburg might be attacked, and he accordingly set out to warn him of the danger. Had he been able to write he would have sent Karl, but he was sure that his warning would more likely be attended to if he went himself. He was aware that he ran a great danger if he were to encounter any of the peasants, who would look upon him, should they discover his object, as a traitor to their cause. He therefore made his way across the country, avoiding all public paths, and keeping as much as possible out of sight of anybody he met. He at length reached the castle in safety. The count could at first scarcely believe the information he gave him. It was impossible that the peasants should dare attack the castles of the nobles. Moretz convinced him, however, at last. He sat for some time without speaking, while he rested his head on his hands, bending over the table. His lips were moving in prayer.

"I will not oppose these poor people," he said, at length. "I will rather reason with them, and bring them to a knowledge of their error. If I were to defend the castle I might kill a good many, and perhaps succeed in driving them away. If I cannot persuade them to give up their enterprise, I may perhaps come and pay you a visit. I would rather abandon my castle than slay my fellow-creatures. I am grateful to you, my friend, for bringing me the warning, as it will give me time for consideration how to act."

Chapter Eight.

Moretz returned, as he had come, to his cottage. Karl soon after arrived, having gone out into the forest for wood. He reported having seen large bodies of men armed in every possible way collecting at a distance, but he kept himself out of sight, for fear they might compel him to accompany them.

In the meantime the count remained, as he had determined, at his post. The day after Moretz had visited him, the report was brought that a large body of men were approaching the castle. Acting according to his resolution, in the plainest dress he ever wore he mounted his charger and rode forward to meet them. As he appeared he was welcomed with a loud shout, and several persons, detaching themselves from the crowd, approached him.

"We have come, friend Furstenburg," they said, "to invite you to join our noble cause. We will give you military rank, and make you one of our leaders; but we can allow no nobles among us, and therefore it must be understood that you will sink your title."

"This is a strange proposal to make to me, my friends," answered the count, after the insurgents had explained their objects and plans. "You profess to be guided by God's word, and yet you undertake to act in direct opposition to it. When the Israelites were led forth to attack their enemies they were under the guidance of God, and made especial instruments for the punishment of evil-doers, who had long obstinately refused to acknowledge Him. You, who have no right to claim being led by God, take upon yourselves to punish those whom you choose to consider your enemies. When Christ came a better law was established, and by that law we are taught to forgive our enemies, and leave their punishment to God, and not to attempt to take it into our own hands."

Again and again the insurgent leaders urged the count to accept their offers, refusing to listen to his arguments. He saw, by the gestures and the expressions they used, that they would probably take him by force. To avoid this was very important, and he therefore requested further time to consider the matter. Some of them evidently desired to enter the castle with him, but this he declined; observing that if he was to act freely, he must be left at liberty. Fortunately they were persuaded to allow him to depart, and he safely reached the gates of his castle.

The insurgents on this marched off in the direction of other castles, whose owners they hoped to enlist in their cause. The count, on entering, ordered the gates to be closed, and then summoning his retainers, told them that he had resolved to abandon the castle, rather than kill any of the misguided people who might come to attack it. He gave them their choice of remaining within the open gates, or obtaining safety by concealing themselves in the neighbourhood. "I have no children, and my distant heir has no right to blame me for my

conduct," he said, when remonstrated with for this proceeding. "I have, besides, One to whom I am first answerable, and He I am sure approves of it." There was, however, a large amount of plate and valuables of various sorts in the castle: these he had carried to a place of concealment, such as most buildings of the sort in those days were provided with. These arrangements were not concluded till nearly midnight. He then set out unaccompanied, and took his way to the hut of old Moretz.

The next day, when the insurgents returned, they found the castle of Furstenburg deserted. Some of their leaders urged them to burn it to the ground, in consequence of having been tricked, by its owner. They were about to rush in, when an old man, who had remained concealed close to the gates, presented himself before them.

"What are you about to do, my friends?" he exclaimed. "Is this the way you show your love of liberty? Because a man does not approve of your mode of proceeding, are you right in destroying his property, and injuring him in every way you can? You speak of the tyranny of your rulers—is not this greater tyranny? I am one of yourselves, and know what you all feel. I feel the same. I desire that our people should have their rights; but I am very sure that by the way you are proceeding you will not obtain them. A just cause cannot be supported by unjust means."

Moretz, for it was he, spoke more to the same effect. Happily, Herder was not with the party, or his success might have been different. At length they were convinced by his arguments, and consented to depart without destroying the castle. After they had gone to a considerable distance, Moretz hurried back to the count with the good news.

"Alas!" said the old noble, "it matters, in truth, but little to me. I am childless, and almost friendless; for with those I once associated I have no longer a desire to mix; and, except that I may live a few years longer, and forward the noble cause of the Reformation, I should be ready even now to lay down life."

"Count," said the old man, rising and standing before him, "you say that you are childless—but are you really so? You once had a daughter?"

"I had, but I cruelly drove her from my door; but I know that she is dead; for, having taken every possible means for her discovery, I could gain no tidings; and I am very sure, knowing her disposition, that ere this, had she been alive, she would have sought a reconciliation. Of the death of her husband I

received tidings. He died fighting in the Spanish army against Barbarossa, and on hearing that my child was left a widow, my heart relented towards her. But tell me, friend, have you any tidings of my daughter?"

"You surmise too rightly, count, that your daughter is dead," answered the woodcutter. "She died in this humble cottage, and in these arms; but before she died she had given birth to a child,—a girl,—who was brought up by my poor daughter, till she herself was also carried to the grave, leaving behind her a son,—young Karl yonder."

"And my grandchild? Where is she?" exclaimed the count, casting a glance at Meta.

"You see her there, count," answered the woodcutter. They were seated in the porch of the cottage. Below it ran a stream, where Meta, aided by Karl, was busily washing. The first thing, perhaps, in the once proud noble's mind was:—

"And can a descendant of mine be thus employed?" The next instant, however, rising from his seat, he hurried down the bank, calling Meta to him. She was quickly by his side. "Child," he said, "which of us is your grandfather, think you?" As he spoke he drew her towards him, and gazed in her face. "Yes, yes, I recognise the features of my own lost daughter!" he exclaimed. "We will ever love old Moretz, and be grateful to him," he said, pressing a kiss on Meta's brow. "But I am your grandfather, and you must try and give me some of the love you bear him."

Again and again the count expressed his gratitude to old Moreu. "And above all things," he added, "that you have brought her up as a true Christian Protestant. Had you returned her to me as an ignorant Papist, as I was long ago, my happiness would have been far less complete."

It was some time before Meta could understand the change in her circumstances, never having indeed been told who was her mother, and believing always that she was Karl's sister. The poor lad was the only one whose spirits sunk at what he heard, when he was told that he should lose his companion. A right feeling, however, soon rose in his bosom, and he rejoiced at Meta's change of fortune.

The peasant-army meantime increased in numbers, and a vast concourse, under a fanatical leader, Thomas Munser, marched through the land, burning castles and towns which refused to

admit them, and committing all sorts of atrocities. There were several similar bands. The people in the Black Forest rallied round John Müller of Bülgenbach. Wearing a red cap and a red cloak, he rode from village to village, ordering the church bells to summon the people to his standard. Several noblemen were compelled to join them. Among others, the famous Geotz von Ber Lichengen was forced to put himself at the head of the rebel army. Many towns, unable to withstand them, opened their gates, and the citizens received them with acclamations. Dr Martin Luther and many other leaders of the Reformation exerted all their influence to induce the peasants to return to their homes. They wrote, they preached, and showed how such proceedings were opposed to the principles of the gospel. At length a large army, raised by the Ex-Emperor of Germany, was sent against the insurgents, while the nobles, in every direction taking courage, banded together to put down the insurrection. Fearfully did they retaliate on the unhappy people for the insults they had received. Seldom could the insurgent bands withstand the well-trained forces sent against them, and a large part of the country was deluged in blood, the fugitives in most instances being slaughtered without mercy.

Chapter Nine.

The band which set forth from the neighbourhood of Gutech was not more successful than others. Although at first they captured and burned a number of castles and entered several towns, in which they levied contributions from the inhabitants, they at length encountered the imperial forces. Not an instant could they withstand the well-trained troops of Germany, but fled before them like chaff before the wind. On reaching the neighbourhood of their own homes they, gathering courage, showed a bolder front than before. It would have been happier for the misguided men had they continued their flight. Old Moretz would not consent to eat the bread of idleness, and had declined the bounty freely offered him by the count. He and Karl had gone farther from home than usual on their daily avocation, when their ears were attracted by what appeared to be the din of battle in the distance. They climbed a height in the neighbourhood, whence, from between the trees, they could look down on an open space in the distance, with a rapid stream on one side. Here a large body of peasants were collected, while another body in front were desperately engaged with some imperial troops, as they appeared to be by their glittering arms and closely serried ranks.

"May God have mercy on them!—for they will have no mercy on each other," exclaimed Moretz, as, leaning his hand on Karl's shoulder, he stood gazing eagerly down on the raging fight, and scarcely able to retain the young lad, who, had he been alone, would probably have rushed down and joined it. The peasants who had hitherto borne the brunt of the battle—being evidently the best armed and bravest—were now driven back on the main body. The latter, seized with a panic, gave way, the imperialists pursuing them, cutting to pieces with their sharp swords, or running through with their pikes, all they overtook. Moretz and his grandson watched the fugitives and their pursuers. The latter, like a devastating conflagration or a fierce torrent, swept all before them, till they disappeared in the distance.

"We may be able to help some of the unfortunate people who may yet survive," observed the old man.

"Oh, yes—yes. Let us hurry on, grandfather," exclaimed Karl. "I fancy that even at this distance I have seen more than one attempt to rise, and then fall back again to the ground."

Moretz and Karl soon reached the spot where the conflict began. From thence, far, far away, was one long broad road covered thickly with the dead and dying and badly wounded. The old man and boy moved among the ghastly heaps, giving such assistance as they were able to those who most needed it. Karl ran to the stream to bring water, for which many were crying out, while Moretz, kneeling down, bound up the poor fellows' wounds. He had thus tended several of the unfortunate men, when he saw a person at a little distance trying to lift himself up on his arm. He had several times made the attempt, when he once more fell back with a groan. Moretz hurried towards him. In the features, pallid from loss of blood and racked with pain, he recognised those of Herr Herder.

"Ah, old man! have you come to mock at me?" exclaimed the latter, as he saw Moretz approaching.

Moretz made no answer, but kneeling down, lifted up the farmer's head, and put the bowl of water he carried to his lips. Herder eagerly took a draught of the refreshing liquid.

"Where are you hurt?" asked Moretz, "that I may wash and bind up your wounds."

Herder pointed to his side and then to one of his legs.

Aided by Karl, who now came up, Moretz took off Herder's clothes, and with the linen which he had collected from the slain, having first washed his wounds, he bound them carefully up.

"We must carry you out of this, for the imperialists returning, will too likely kill all they find alive," said Moretz.

"You cannot carry me," said Herder, faintly: "you would sink under my weight."

"I will try," answered Moretz. "Karl will help me."

With a strength of which the old man seemed incapable, he lifted the bulky form of the farmer on his shoulders, and telling Karl to support his wounded leg, he hurried towards the hill from which he had lately descended.

"But you can never carry me up that hill," said Herder, as he gazed at the height above their heads.

"No," answered Moretz; "but there is a cave near its foot. I can there conceal you till your enemies have gone away; and I will then get some friend to assist me in carrying you to my hut. You will be safe in the cave, at all events, for few know of it; and as soon as the soldiers have disappeared I will get the assistance of a friend to carry you on."

Old Moretz, as he staggered on, had several times to stop and recover strength, for the farmer's body was very heavy. At length, however, he reached the cavern he spoke of. Having deposited his burden, and left Karl to watch him, he climbed the height, whence he could observe the proceedings of the imperialists. He had not long to wait. As he had seen them advancing like a rushing torrent, now they returned like the ebb of the ocean. As he had feared, they appeared to be slaughtering those they found still stretched alive on the ground. On they went, till there were none to kill, and then, the trumpet collecting them in more compact order, they marched onwards in the direction whence they had come. Moretz, having found a neighbour in whom he had confidence, he returned to the cavern, and together they carried Herder up to his cottage.

"I have but poor fare to offer you, Herr Herder," he said, "but such as it is I freely present it to you."

"What makes you thus take care of me?" said Herder, scarcely noticing the remark. "I never did you any good. I have been your enemy for many years."

"God's blessed word says—'Love your enemies, do good to them who hate and ill-use you.' If you had treated me far worse than you have done, still I should desire to help you."

"Ah! you conquer me, Moretz," said Herder, after a long silence. "I have no doubt that the Bible says as you tell me; but I did not think that any one would thus act according to its commands."

"Nor would they," answered Moretz, "unless the Holy Spirit had changed their hearts. The natural man may read the commands over and over again, but he takes no heed of them."

Thus Moretz frequently spoke to his guest. Karl also often read the Bible to him. One day they received a visit from Gottlieb Spena. He was on his way to the castle of Furstenburg. Before he left the woodcutter's hut Herder declared that he now understood how Christ had died to save him from the just consequences of his sin.

Meta grew into a noble-looking young lady, and married a Protestant baron, who ever stood up boldly for the faith. She never forgot her kind guardian nor her foster-brother—Karl. She provided a comfortable house for old Moretz, and watched over him affectionately till, in extreme old age, he quitted this world for one far better.

Karl became the head steward of her estates, and ever proved himself a true and faithful man, as he had been an honest and good boy. Spena was greatly instrumental in spreading the glorious truths of the gospel throughout the country, but at length, venturing into a part of Europe where the papists were supreme, he was seized and accused of being a recreant monk. Refusing to abjure the faith, he—as were many others at that time—was condemned to the flames, and became one of the noble army of martyrs who will one day rise up in judgment against that fearful system of imposture and tyranny which condemned them to suffering and death.

There was one district where the insurrection was put down without bloodshed. It was that of the truly pious and Protestant prince, the Elector of Saxony. The power of the word there produced its effect. Luther, Friedrich Myconius, and others went boldly among them, and, by their eloquent arguments, induced

them to abandon their designs. Thus, at length, peace was restored to the land of Luther, although these proceedings of the misguided peasants for a time greatly impeded the progress of the Reformation.

The End.
